

**COMMISSION OF ARCHITECTURAL REVIEW
STAFF REPORT
June 27, 2017 Meeting**

4. **COA-018231-2017** (W. Matthews) **3009 Monument Avenue
Monument Avenue Old and Historic District**

Project Description: **Replace rear porches.**

Staff Contact: **M. Pitts**

The applicant requests approval to replace the three story porch structure at the rear of a multifamily building in the Monument Avenue Old and Historic District with a three story porch structure of similar design. The existing porches show evidence of severe deterioration and do not appear to be the original porches as they appear to be constructed of pressure treated wood. The applicant proposes to maintain the existing porch roof and demolish the structure below. The applicant is proposing to reconstruct the porches with composite decking boards, composite Richmond rail, wooden posts wrapped in vinyl, and composite privacy fence to separate the porches on each level. The composite material is constructed of wood and plastic.

Staff recommends approval of the project, with conditions. The *Richmond Old and Historic Districts Handbook and Design Review Guidelines* state that whenever possible porches should be repaired and partially replaced rather than completely replaced and that replacements should match the original as much as possible (pg. 67, #3, #5). The applicant is proposing to retain the existing porch roof structure which will be repaired in-kind and remove the deteriorated porch structure which is not the original porch structure. Staff supports the demolition of this deteriorated non-historic element.

The *Guidelines* states that synthetic tongue-and-groove porch flooring may be a reasonable alternative to the use of wood tongue-and-groove decking (pg. 57). The *Guidelines* also notes that if in-kind materials are impractical, then substitute materials may be used (pg. 57). Staff recommends approval of the proposed composite decking with the condition that details of the decking boards be submitted for administrative review and approval.

The *Richmond Old and Historic Districts Handbook and Design Review Guidelines* state that when replacing elements, materials that match the original in type, or are physically and chemically compatible substitute materials that convey the same appearance as the surviving elements, should be used (pg. 55, #7). Staff finds the proposed railing with its small installation brackets and Richmond rail design will convey the appearance of railings found on structures in the district. Though a more detailed balustrade can be found on the roof of the façade, staff recommends approval of the proposed simple railing design as the Guidelines note that back porches are typically more utilitarian in design than front porches (pg. 67, #4). Staff recommends that the applicant provide a sample

of the proposed railing for administrative review and approval to allow staff to determine if the railing conveys the appearance of wood as staff has concerns that the railing may have an inappropriate sheen to it. As vinyl is not an appropriate material for use on historic structures, staff recommends the applicant wrap the posts in a smooth composite material to be reviewed and approved by staff, not the proposed vinyl.

The *Guidelines* discourage the use of products with a faux wood grain (pg. 56). Staff recommends the applicant install a wooden fence to separate the porches or work with staff to determine a more appropriate material than the proposed faux wood grain, composite fence.

It is the assessment of staff that the application, with the noted conditions, is consistent with the Standards for Rehabilitation in Section 30-930.7(b) of the City Code, as well as with the *Richmond Old and Historic Districts Handbook and Design Review Guidelines*, specifically, the pages cited above, adopted by the Commission for review of Certificates of Appropriateness under the same section of the code.